



Islamophobia Permeates Foreign Policy, Speaker Says

February 21, 2020 by Jaime Moore-Carrillo (<https://thehoya.com/author/jaime-moore-carrillo/>)

Young U.S. citizens risk forgetting how post-9/11 U.S. policies have harmed Muslim communities at home and abroad, author and researcher Nazia Kazi said at a Wednesday event.

After terrorist organization Al Qaeda attacked U.S. military and economic targets Sept. 11, 2001, the U.S. launched a decadeslong effort to neutralize terror threats across the globe. U.S. counterterrorism efforts, which remain a centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy, focus on Islamic fundamentalist organizations in the Middle East. Experts, pundits and policymakers have criticized the undertaking — dubbed the war on terror — for its allegedly unclear goals and problematic methods.



The U.S. government’s war on terror is a manifestation of Islamophobia, according to Kazi. U.S. citizens must recognize state actions can qualify as Islamophobic to begin to counter bigotry more broadly.

“If we are to understand Islamophobia at all, we must push ourselves to think beyond the actions of bigoted individuals, and we must push ourselves to understand the roots of their hate,” Kazi said. “We must push ourselves to see the Islamophobia that is perpetrated by the state and all too often paid for by our tax dollars. And most importantly, we must push ourselves to see our own tragic and often invisible complicity.”

The post-9/11 expression “never forget” has been used to justify and mask U.S. foreign policy blunders, according to Kazi.

DR.NAZIAKAZI.COM | Author and researcher Nazia Kazi spoke about Islamophobia in U.S. foreign policy at a Jan. 20 event hosted by Bridge Initiative.

“‘Never forget’ is the brand name of 9/11, and as a slogan ‘never forget’ is on par with ‘Just Do It,’ and we have to ask: If ‘Just Do It’ makes us go out and buy Nikes, then when it comes to ‘never forget,’ what exactly are we being sold?” Kazi said. “‘Never forget’ functions ideologically, making sure we do forget — that we forget the uneasy global histories that have better memory, a more nuanced, contextual memory would force us to remember.”

Kazi serves (<https://drnaziakazi.com/>) as an assistant professor of anthropology at Stockton University, a public university in New Jersey, where she studies Islamophobia and U.S. foreign policy. Her 2018 book “Islamophobia, Race, and Global Politics” discusses (<https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781538110096/Islamophobia-Race-and-Global-Politics>) the intersection of Islamophobia and U.S. foreign policy, according to the publisher’s website.

Those born after 9/11 lack knowledge surrounding the incident because of twisted historical narratives, according to Kazi.

“I surveyed undergraduate students this fall, students who were born after 9/11 in 2001. I was curious to find out what these young Americans actually do remember about the thing they’re supposed to never forget,” Kazi said. “Eight percent of my respondents couldn’t tell me what the Patriot Act was. One respondent said it was a Netflix show starring Hasan Minhaj.”

Signed into law by President George W. Bush almost two months after the 9/11 attacks, the USA PATRIOT Act introduced (<https://www.vox.com/2015/6/2/8701499/patriot-act-explain>) sweeping reforms with the described intention of bolstering U.S. national security. The law, which granted U.S. law enforcement the power to collect communication records and detain immigrants suspected of terrorism, has drawn criticism from politicians and human rights advocates.

The event, titled (<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/islamophobic-nationalism-and-forgetfulness-in-the-terror-decades-tickets-92072953683#>) “Islamophobic Nationalism and Forgetfulness in the Terror Decades,” was hosted by the Bridge Initiative, a university research group that investigates Islamophobia, in the Intercultural Center. During the event, Kazi discussed the diverse manifestations of Islamophobia in the United States, especially in the foreign policy arena.

U.S. society has glossed over unflattering aspects of U.S. foreign policy after 9/11 through slanted ceremonies and educational programs, according to Kazi. She referenced the United States’ often overlooked support for Saudi Arabia and CIA sponsorship of mujahideen fighters in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989, instances she said reflected United States’ willingness to compromise purported U.S. human rights values for political ends.

“These are not the histories that make it into our social studies books. They might not even be the histories you expected to hear at a university lecture on Islamophobia. But there are ideological underpinnings at the heart of U.S. empire building,” Kazi said. “It might begin to help us understand how it is that generations of Americans have come to see their country as a global force for good or a hapless victim of evil, but never, to quote Martin Luther King Jr., as ‘the greatest purveyor of violence’ on Earth.”

Hoya Staff Writer Ashley Zhao contributed reporting.

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